

*A*  
*A Comparison between the doctrines of Christianity and  
those of Popery with regard to Civil Government.*

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S E R M O N

PREACHED IN

CHRIST-CHURCH, DUBLIN;

On FRIDAY OCTOBER XXIII, MDCCLXVII.

BEING THE

Anniversary of the IRISH REBELLION.

Before His EXCELLENCY

GEORGE, Lord Viscount TOWNSHEND,

Lord Lieutenant General, and General Governour of IRELAND.

By WILLIAM LORD BISHOP of *Down*.

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*Die Jovis, 29 Die Octobris, 1767.*

**I**T is Ordered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled, That the Thanks of this House shall be, and are hereby given to the Lord Bishop of *Dromore*, for his Sermon Preached before this House, the 23d Instant at *Christ-Church*; and His Lordship is hereby desired to Print and Publish the same: and that no Person do presume to Print the said Sermon, but such as his Lordship shall appoint.

*Wm. Watts Gayer,* } Cler' Parliamentor.  
*Edward Gayer,* }



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TITUS iii. 1.

*Put them in Mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.*

THE *Jews* at the time when the gospel was promulged mistook so much the prophetic descriptions of the *Messiah*, and had so high a sense of their superior privileges, that they disdained subjection to heathen powers, and were apt to rebel on every prospect of shaking off the yoke. Those among them who embraced christianity seem to have retained part of these prejudices; and many other christians judaized in this respect, and, through false notions of their christian liberty and spiritual advantages, imagined that they were set free from civil obligations. In opposition to such opinions, which caused † *the name of God and his doctrine to be blasphemed*, precepts

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† 1 Tim. vi. 1.



cepts of submission to civil powers are no less seasonably than earnestly inculcated by the sacred writers ; and the spirit of christianity, which is always amiable and reasonable and conducive to human happiness, takes occasion to benefit mankind by displaying itself on the subject of social and civil duties.

At a time therefore when we are called upon to commemorate an offence against civil society as unjustifiable in its springs and causes, as bloody in its progress, and as ruinous in its effects, as any that disgraces the annals of history, and which appears to have principally, though not solely, arisen from religion ; on such an occasion, I say, it seems not unseasonable to shew that the genius and disposition of genuine christianity are highly favourable and beneficial to civil society ; and to contrast this view with some doctrines of a corrupt church the opposite tendency of which has been experienced by ourselves and others.

I. Christianity gives us the most just and awful conceptions of the one God ; it assures us that the minutest transactions of this life fall under his inspection and controul ; and represents him in such a manner under the characters of rewarder and avenger as most powerfully to engage our hopes and alarm our fears. Whatever good effects therefore religion in general can have on communities, these christianity tends to produce in the highest degree.

But the influence of all religious institutions on national welfare must be allowed to encrease in proportion as they strengthen the cause of virtue. For it is a truth which none can disprove, and which only a few of corrupt hearts and perverted minds have denied, that virtue



is the foundation of greatness and stability to civil societies. History teaches us that it has given to every form of government the greatest perfection which it admits of; and it is evident from the reason of things that it must afford a state high advantages in circumstances which are alike, and that it must greatly counterbalance such as are unfavourable. For by diffusing a spirit of sobriety industry and simplicity, of concord justice and fortitude; by thus exalting and perfecting human nature, it makes society to consist of members who form, as it were, a superior class of beings: and, besides producing naturally the best effects, it derives on communities the countenance and protection of God, who may well be thought to interpose in the support and deliverance of righteous states, for the reward and encouragement of virtue, and to keep alive in mankind a sense of this truth that \* *his kingdom ruleth over all.*

But christianity builds virtue on the firmest foundation by declaring it to be the will of God as it were by a voice from heaven. It distinctly and unerringly exhibits the great outlines of duty; and not only abounds in the purest and most exalted precepts, but affords also the strongest motives and assistances to the performance of them.

If we go on to consider the enforcements and restraints of christianity relating to some particular actions which peculiarly affect social life, its influence on public welfare will more fully appear. It enjoins us to keep our vessel † *in sanctification and honour* as ‡ *the temple of the Holy Ghost*, and to be temperate § *in all things* in our

\* Ps. ciii. 19.

† 1. Thess. iv. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

§ 1 Cor. ix. 25.

our contest for *an incorruptible crown* ; by which it checks the growth of luxury and sensuality, vices ever fatal to common-wealths : it not only condemns injustice oppression and fraud, by which the ends of society are defeated ; but the tribe of vices, such as sloth envy and ingratitude, by which it is weakened and deformed : it enforces a sacred regard to truth from the near relation in which christians stand to each other as members of the same mystical body, and thus affords a new inducement to veracity and fidelity in our oaths discourse and compacts : it directs a christian's ambition to this object that *he study to be quiet\* and do his own business* ; a duty the discharge of which would greatly conduce to the tranquillity of civil life : it teaches every man to regard *another's wealth †*, and describes *charity as seeking ‡ not her own* ; by which it tends to spread universally a generous and public spirit : and, to finish the consideration of it in this view, it inculcates from forcible and new motives the virtues of meekness and humility, of compassion and benevolence ; by which it leads human societies to imitate superior orders of beings in the disposition to promote general happiness, the highest ornament of the best natures.

But christianity conduces to public welfare still more particularly by giving the wisest precepts concerning relative and social duties, and by training the mind to subjection wherever it is due.

We are required all of us to be § *subject one to another* notwithstanding any accidental superiority of station, by discharging offices of condescension and humility, and by submitting to truth and reason wherever we find it ; nay  
often

\* 1 Thess. iv. 11. † 1 Cor. x. 24. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 5.  
§ 1 Pet. v. 5.

often to the infirmities prejudices and passions of those with whom we converse. We are enjoined to \* *honour all men* with that honour which is due to them as partakers of the same common nature and christian privileges ; and which will not only secure them, how mean soever their rank may be, from unworthy and contemptuous treatment, but in a proper degree make their wellbeing the object of our concern.

Much more are we to pay subjection and honour where any superiority from nature requires them. And christianity, by enforcing this subjection and concurring with nature in this as in all other respects, at the same time promotes the happiness of domestic life and disciplines the mind to civil subordination.

But, farther, christianity directly enforces obedience to civil magistrates from the wisest topics ; from a dread of that punishment which they may justly inflict on evil doers ; from the high utility of their institution ; and from a sense of duty to God, whose ordinance society is justly declared to be. For it is the will of God that the weak and innocent should be protected, and the invaders of human rights restrained ; ends to be secured only by civil society : nay, the forming of ourselves into societies immediately follows from that constitution of things which God has appointed, from our need of mutual assistance and power of affording it both as to the improvement of our nobler faculties and the supply of our natural wants ; and from the strong impulses of social affection by which we are actuated.

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\* 1 Pet. ii. 17.



The measures of our subjection are to be fixed by the ends of society, and by the laws and usages of the country in which we live. The two Apostles \* who touch on this point enjoin submission and condemn resistance in general terms; leaving their precepts, as their manner is, to be limited by reason and nature.

The circumstance of paying tribute is expressly insisted on by St. *Paul* † because there was a sect among the *Jews* which held its unlawfulness.

The Apostle observes farther that *honour* ‡ as well as tribute is due to the magistrate. And accordingly those § *presumptuous* and *selfwilled* persons are sharply rebuked who *despise dominion and speak evil of dignities*.

Christians are also exhorted to offer up petitions and thanksgivings || *for all that are in authority*; a precept the performance of which must be attended with the best consequences. For such prayers will naturally be productive of that subjection and honour which are due to magistrates; as they impress on us our duty, and make it inconsistent with every religious and ingenuous principle to defeat the ends of that government which we beseech God to prosper.

But as in relative so also in civil duties christianity lays men under reciprocal obligations. St. *Paul*, while he is enforcing the subject's duty, with an admirable delicacy of address reminds the magistrate of the end of his office, that he is the minister of God *for good* \*\*.

Such then are the precepts of our religion with regard to civil government; and if it has not recommended in express terms the love of our country, yet all must confess that it has recommended its genuine fruits and that benevolence

\* Rom. xiii. 1, 2.    † Pet. ii. 13.    † Rom. xiii. 7.    † Ib. § 2 Pet. ii. 10.  
 † 1 Tim. ii. 1.    \*\* Rom. xiii. 4.

nevolence which comprehends it. And, to answer this objection more directly, if it does not teach the duty in so many words, this is owing to the nature of the christian dispensation, which supposes an antecedent law of reason, and was not intended as a system of *moral* much less of *political* duties.

In the same manner an attention to the design of the gospel removes the force of another objection, that christianity has no civil institutions. The grand aim of revelation was to instruct us in religion and morality, points with which our eternal wellbeing is connected. Where duty is not concerned, as in determining the forms of civil government and the modes of wise administration, men may well be left to their own reason to trace out what is expedient for their temporal happiness. Such general principles as the gospel affords with respect to civil life are highly useful to mankind, and illustrate the perfect harmony between reason and revelation ; but it is absurd to expect an interposition of the Deity to the exclusion of reason in a province where it could duly exert itself.

How far public happiness has been in fact promoted by christianity, is a consideration which its enemies have insisted on with triumph. That it has improved the morals of mankind, and humanized their natures, is what no unprejudiced enquirer will deny. If it was itself persecuted by the mistaken zeal or policy of the heathen magistrate, it was designed to correct those abuses of the law of reason to which this malignant disposition owed its rise. If animosities and persecutions prevail among christians themselves, this shews indeed that a part of mankind is capable of perverting every gracious interposition of God for the regulation of their evil passions : But nevertheless christianity

tianity has the praise of conducing much to soften men's tempers by the spirit of love which it breathes, and to open their understandings by the freedom of enquiry which it encourages. So that it every way tends to produce mutual forbearance for that diversity of opinion in some points which, on account of men's different talents and opportunities, will ever be the result of † *searching the scriptures and* || *proving all things*.

But I pass on to the painful contrast between the Romish doctrines with regard to civil society and the reasonable and amiable ones which are set forth in the gospel.

II. The corruptions of popery weaken the two main pillars of society, religion and virtue. False objects of worship distract devotion, and divide among many that love and affiance which ought to rest full and entire on the one supreme being: nor can any thing more directly tend to make void the precept of serving God \* *in spirit and in truth* than burthening worship with a perpetual succession of unmeaning rites and ceremonies.

A relaxation of morality is almost unavoidably occasioned by the doctrine of indulgences and groundless reliance on the merits of others; by teaching the efficacy of a transient sorrow for sin instead of an habitual detestation of it; by the substitution of bodily penance for the fixed change and renovation of mind which the gospel requires; and by lulling men into security that their sins are blotted out by cursory confessions and judicial absolutions, and by deathbed rites no less absurdly than dangerously extended beyond the apostolical age.

Nor,

† John v. 39.

|| 1 Thess. v. 21.

\* John iv. 24.



Nor, again, is the good of society in a small degree obstructed by the frequency of monastic vows, by the avocations of idle shews, and by the superstitious observance of \* *days and months and years*.

It may be farther remarked that public welfare is made precarious by the admission of one class of men into the recesses of every heart; by the awe which they impress, and the unlimited ascendancy which they acquire, from that most horrid and blasphemous pretension to the power of *creating* (as themselves express it) the Son of God and offering him in sacrifice to the Father, and from their administration of other rites deemed in themselves sufficient to gain the divine favour; by their pleading exemption from the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate; and by their vows of implicit obedience to their spiritual head inconsistent with their civil ties: some of which observations with regard to one order, ever fertile in treasonable plots, have their truth attested by the present conduct of the most bigoted *Romish* princes.

But what particularly demands our attention is, how fully the head of this grand † apostacy has verified St. Paul's description of him, that he ‡ *opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or worshipped*, or above every temporal prince how august or sacred soever. Here then history presents him receiving and exacting the humblest submission from kings and emperors, proudly arrogating to himself the donation of kingdoms, and thus *as God* (for so civil magistrates are called) *sitting in the temple of God*, the christian church, *shewing that he is God* by extending the civil jurisdiction of an oppressive hierarchy even to § *putting down one prince and setting up another*.

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\* Gal. iv. 10.

† 2 Thess. ii. 4.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 1.

§ Ps. lxxv. 7.

The papal power of deposing princes, and of freeing subjects from their oath of fidelity, was an uncontroverted article of faith in the church of *Rome* during the course of near five centuries : It is the tenor of her canon law ; it has the sanction of many general councils ; and there are repeated instances of its actual exercise. The partial disavowal of it by a decree of \* a single faculty, and in the approved exposition of one † eminent writer, under the reign of a vigorous ‡ monarch in a neighbouring kingdom the most intent of any in subjection to the see of *Rome* on repelling its encroachments, and yet where in the same § century it had been imposed as a fundamental doctrine of their church by the whole clergy under pain of excommunication ; such a disavowal cannot be placed in the scale against the frequent and solemn approbations of it. Much less can we be secured from its effects by the unauthorized declarations of private men made with a view to mitigate the rigour of penal laws extorted by treasons and rebellions. The doctrine may still have force to shake or subvert government when seasonably urged on the conscience by the hopes and fears of futurity, which the *Romish* emissaries so powerfully address to affect the civil actions of their adherents, and by which they overbalance the certainty of the severest temporal punishment. The renunciation of such destructive tenets should be as general and solemn as the recorded decisions in their support.

But the security of oaths has been lately offered to government in return for its full confidence and protection. Early in the reign of that prince under whom the troubles now commemorated arose, the cause of popery in these king-

\* The Sorbonne.

† Bossuet.

‡ Lewis xiv.

§ 1614.

kingdoms was negotiated at *Rome*, and like oaths of allegiance framed. But we have little reason to conclude from the good faith and moderation of the *Romish* Church, or from circumstances particularly affecting ourselves, that the acceptance of such engagements would have prevented the rebellion of this day which other general obligations of a religious and civil nature were much too weak to prevent; or that such a measure, by softening the disposition of the *Romanists* towards us, would have restrained them from the many acts of oppression and cruelty under which the protestant part of this nation groaned towards the close of the last century. It seems far more probable, both from general and particular topics of consideration, that strengthening the hands of our enemies by placing them in stations of power and trust, or by extending their property, would have contributed greatly if not effectually to the subversion of our religion and government.

We may likewise reasonably oppose to what has been advanced on this subject the following more decisive language of papal authority. “ The \* oath of allegiance to heretics  
“ cannot be taken consistently with the catholic faith,  
“ and the salvation of the soul.” “ We † forbid that  
“ you should observe leagues compacts and agreements  
“ with heretics, or permit them to be observed.” “ Know  
“ ‡ that you could not pledge your faith to heretics;  
“ and, if you keep your faith with them, you sin mortally.”

We may well consider farther what must be the consequence of the avowed persuasion that members of reformed churches are outcasts from heaven, and final objects of God's

\* The words of Pope *Paul* v. † The words of Pope *Urban* vi.

‡ The words of Pope *Martin* v.



God's wrath. As if Christ had not clearly fixed the terms of our acceptance in his gospel; or as if it were the boldest impiety for man to place himself in the judgment seat of God. Hence unreserved obedience to papal edicts dictated by ambition and worldly policy, commanding Catholic princes to "expel \* heretics," and "to withhold from them the comforts of humanity" "with the faithful." Hence secret detestation of them at all times; and, when the minds of men are inflamed in times of turbulence and disorder, such horrid effects as this nation felt, cool and deliberate murder in all the shapes which the most savage cruelty could devise.

These religious causes concurring with the unhappy state of the times, with groundless surmises of a public nature, and with the interested endeavours of some to instill or inflame national hatred, gave rise to a rebellion which, though restrained by providence from executing its full purpose, for which we now offer up to God our most devout thanks, yet so marked its course with blood that it spread depopulation felt to this day; and, incapable of being disproved or palliated by any arts, will ever stand high in the rank of those transactions which leave a deep stain on human nature.

In countries where knowledge is generally diffused, and where the principles of civil liberty are well understood, there are many, no doubt, of the mistaken adherents to the *Romish* superstition who disclaim the treasonable doctrines of genuine popery. Christianity requires that we behave to all of them in their personal capacity with moderation and brotherly kindness, † *instructing* them *in meekness*, and ‡ *speaking the truth in love*; though  
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\* See the Approbation of the council of *Constance* by pope *Martin*.

† 2 Tim. ii. 25.

‡ Eph. iv. 15.

at fit seasons, for it is equally an apostolical precept, *exhorting § and rebuking them with all authority*. But in their civil capacity public safety demands that we regard them with a jealous eye. May they all duly consider that, as christianity shews so friendly a spirit to civil government, disloyalty in a christian is a crime highly aggravated; and may they all make such returns to the mild and gracious government which they have long experienced as are required by the motives of gratitude and interest, the obligations of reason, and the authority of that revelation which has placed these precepts in such close union, † *Fear God, Honour the King*.

§ Titus ii. 15.

† 1 Pet. ii. 17.

THE END.

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union + Fear God, blessed be his name.

THE END.

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